

## INDOCHINA

*of* to *the*

Discouragement with the country and disillusionment in the exotic charms of its people characterized almost without exception the reaction of the first French in Indo-China. Men of such varied temperaments as Bourde, Bonnetain, **Dutreuil, and Lyautey** found the Annamites, from top to bottom **of** the social scale, totally unheroic, in virility, essentially **servile**, incapable **of spiritual** growth. The case was hopeless: the modern Annamite was only the degenerate debris of a race formerly great but now foundering beyond redemption. Physically he was repellent, his face bestial, hideous, and petrified with idiocy.<sup>1</sup> The aristocratic Louis de Camille felt an unconquerable repugnance for his Khmer companions though they were all of royal blood.<sup>8</sup> None of the **Indo-Chinese** could compare with the colourful and artistic Hindus, or had the dramatic beauty of the Arabs.<sup>5</sup>

Later, when the French had recovered from their initial disappointment and found an aristocratic elegance in these people, even their **most** ardent admirers could not help reflecting upon the extraordinary combination of refinement and dirt. They were like carved ivory buried in grime. They might wash frequently, but in muddy water; **they** burned incense at the ancestral altar yet reeked of decayed fish; the children were covered with sores, yet even the poorest of them wore silver necklaces; they put on exquisitely embroidered tunics, yet at even the **greatest** ceremonials gave unmistakable evidence of being

**Unfortunately,** the first unfavourable impressions were only strengthened by association **with** the interpreter-servant class of Afamamites, **to this** day for the majority of

colonials they constitute  
 their sole contact **with**, that people. They are either  
 unaware or forget that  
 are the dregs of native society, isolated from the re-  
 of communal and family life, and so they are pecu-  
 to **the** cointegrating effects of European contact.  
 The  
 of in late-China is largely devoted to the  
 of<sup>1</sup> their servants — chiefly their thefts and **lightning-**  
**like** The given to European **households** by  
 their servants  
 narrated, but nowhere more amusingly than by Madame  
 Vassal,<sup>4</sup> At the end of her first month's **residence** all her  
 linen had disap-

<sup>1</sup> Bral. (Bam\* **1886**), p. 54.  
 \* De Ct«rf. **Exftiift**, m (Rife, 1872), pp. 5-6.  
 \* Lywitey, H<sub>s</sub> At «\*•• (Ftek, **1931**), p. Si.  
 \* O. M<sub>s</sub> Mm Mm (Bios, **191** ix P\* 36\*)